

# Prehistoric Age in Karnataka

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**Abstract:** *Karnataka is mostly a plateau with great environmental contrasts. The western parts get more rain because they are elevated or lie eastern, like within the direct monsoon belt, whereas the Chitalgarg, are semi-arid. The major rivers are the Kaveri, the Tungabhadra, the two Pennars and the Palar. Palaeolithic sites have been reported from different parts of the sites. A few have been reported from different parts of the States. Early Palaeolithic sites have been discovered in the Shimoga and Chitradurga districts*

**Key Words:** *Karnataka, Tungabhadra, Palaeolithic, Kibbanahalli, Krishna and Sivananbi, Nandikeshvara, Pattadkal, Sivayogamandir,Badamis.*

Karnataka is mostly a plateau with great environmental contrasts. The western parts get more rain because they are elevated or lie eastern, like within the direct monsoon belt, whereas the Chitalgarg, are semi-arid. The major rivers are the Kaveri, the Tungabhadra, the two Pennars and the Palar. Palaeolithic sites have been reported from different parts of the sites. A few have been reported from different parts of the States. Early Palaeolithic sites have been discovered in the Shimoga and Chitradurga districts. A Palaeolithic settlement was discovered at Kibbanahalli in Tamkurdistrict. On the two tributaries of the Krishna, the Malaprabha and the Ghataprabha, Early Palaeolithic sites have been found. Two such rich sites are on the Malaprabha and Menagsi or MegurAsoti on the Bennihalla, an affluent of this river. Some 21 sites have been discovered by Joshi who surveyed the entire 320 km area of the river valley. Angawadi and Bagalkot on the Chataprabha are rich sites. Some more sites have been reported from Herkal, Kolhar, Almati on the Krishna and Sivananbi, Nandikeshvara, Pattadkal, Sivayogamandir near Badamis.

The early man seems to have avoided the wooded western district, including Dharwar proper. The most favourite and densely populated areas seems to have been the comparatively open valleys in the Bijapur district.

R.S.Pappu carried out an intensive survey of the Krishna and the Ghataprabha around Angawadi and followed this up by an excavation of the gravel in the AngawadiNala. Angawadi is situated on the Ghataprabha at a distance of 13 km north-west of Bagalkot and 5 km from Kovalli. Here there is a small hillock of quartzite with veins of chert. This juxtaposition of these rocks, were used by early and Middle Palaeolithic men. Early Palaeolithic men preferred to live on lower foothills and the banks of the river which flowed in a wider bed, because here he could collect with ease various kinds of pebbles. These favourAable factors-abundant raw material, perennial water supply, and suitable physiographic setting with a forest cover which must have teemed with game and edible roots and fruits must have made Angawadi area an ideal habitation for Stone Age men. These men would have lived in fairly large groups all along the Ghataprabha and the Malaprabha in the present

Bijapur district, as it appears from the number of tools. Quartzite of various shade were preferred though chert, quartz, etc., are available. A total collection of 523 tools (a major portion from excavation) was made.

At Nittur in Bellary district, Early Palaeolithic tools were found in association with animal fossils. Nittur is on the right bank of the Tungabhadra. Thirtyone pebble tools, all made on dyke basalt, were collected. The fossils include the remains of *BosNamadicus*.

A stratified Acheulian site was discovered at a place called Gulbal in the south western part of the Gulbarga district. The site lies at the foot of famous Salvadgi limestone plateau. About 100 tools have been discovered in situ in the deposit. This site is unique in that most of the artifacts are on silicified limestone. A few artifacts are on chert. About one kilometer upstream of this locality a factory site has been discovered. Here a small number of tools were found.

Taminhal, Almatti and Bagalkot are the some of the Middle Palaeolithic sites; of these the first two are stratified. The other important sites are Kovalli and Angawadi. At Kovalli, chert occurs as bands in the limestones. This was a primary site. Limestone, a softer material, weathers more quickly and disintegrates leaving prominent ridges on chert. The latter have weathered into nodules. The Middle Palaeolithic settlers preparing a fine grained material have taken advantages of these nodules though the settlers and Angawadi a few kilometers further south utilised quartzite pebbles. Salvadgi in the Krishna Bhima basin in Bijapur district forms a part of the limestone area.

Beautiful flinty chert occurs as veins and bands which now stands out as outcrops in thick black soil. The settlers of the Middle Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods utilised all these though the latter also utilised chalcedony.

A number of Middle Palaeolithic settlements are known from Shorapur Doab in the Gulbarga district. Stratified sites are Meralbhavi, Salvadgi, Mallur, Devapur, Gurjihah and Tumkur. Of the factory sites, three are located in fields, containing extensive veins of brownish chert in limestone formations and three sites are situated on high level gravels composed of somewhat whitish chert. Other stratified sites are Gulbal, Devapur, Hungsi, Kaldevanhalli and Wajal on the HungsiNullah in the ShorapurTaluk; Hurhatti and Hegratgi on the Don river; and Hagargundi on the Bhima river. At Hagargundi fossils of *Bos*, *Elephas* and certain unidentified species of the *Cervidae* family have been found in situ along with artifacts. Another factory site is Jawali on the Amarja, a tributary of the Bhima in the northern part of the same district. The raw material is chert, agate, etc., which occur as in the veins in the Deccan Trap, overlying the shales and limestones.

Middle Palaeolithic tools were found at Bangaltota, Bellary. In Layer 2 of a trench dug at Bangaltota, Bellary three lithic industries were found. This layer was 40 cm thick and overlay that of murrum and disintegrated granite and underlay a layer of sticky red brown soil, 23 cm in thickness. Out of total collection of 1,500 specimens, there was one of agate, about 50 of quartzite, 126 of quartz and 116 of patinated basalt. Though the overall number of the last was the largest.

The mixed collection is important from several points of view. Stratigraphically it underlies a sticky red brown soil which has been found as fossil soil in a nearby ashmound at Kupgal. It has been dated around 9,000 B.C., that is, the earliest Holocene. Thus the industries contained within layer 2 belong to the Upper Pleistocene. The industries are generally assigned to Middle Palaeolithic.

Upper Palaeolithic sites at Salvadgi in Bijapur district, forms part of the Krishna Bhima or Shorapur Doab. Morphologically, it is a limestone plateau with a thick cover of reddish soil. Here workshop debris may be found over an area of 2 acres. Still a bigger workshop was found at Meralbhavi, about 3 km south of Salvadgi. It is 7 to 8 acres in area. A sample collection of 963 specimens showed that 196 specimens belong to Middle Palaeolithic industry and 446 to the blade tool industry. The HungsiNullah and its tributaries lying to the eastern side of the Salvadgi-Meralbhavi plateau show five layers, viz., (vi) surface late Stone Age tools (microliths), (v) black-brown silt with loose granular gravel with blade and burin tools, (iv) yellow brown silt, (iii) pabbly-oblong gravel with tools, (ii) coarse boundary gravel with tools, and (i) bed-rock.

The loose granular gravel is about 10 inches in thickness and was noticed at Meralbhavi, Gulbal, Benhatt and Hungsi, all lying within a reach of 6 to 8 kilometers from the workshop at Salvadgi. The industry is exclusively on reddish brown chert. The artifacts from the factory sites were in mint condition with no physical or chemical change.

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